MARJORIE LIU

SANA TAKEDA

image

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MONSTRESS™

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THE STORY SO FAR...

The Battle of Ravenna is raging, leaving no participant unscarred. After sending in a small band of lilium-powered Cumaea to wreak havoc on the Arcanic civilians inside the city, Colonel Anuwat's human army used their powerful wave cannon to breach Ravenna's formidable gate. Then the Arcanics blew up the remainder of their own gate to crush invading soldiers and create a rubble pile too high for more humans to cross. Inside the walls, Arcanic civilians led by Corvin and the Warlord attacked the invaders with improvised weapons and Arcanic battle gifts, while outside Maika and the Grey Riders ambushed and terrified the outer bands of amassing troops.

But nothing could have prepared the Federation of Man for the two biggest blows: Maika's destruction of the wave cannon, and Tuya's takeover of the Warlord's airship fleet. With intelligence from the disgraced Master Ren, Tuya and the fleet are headed to Mazrelpol to take down the Federation's lilium refinery. Against all odds, it appears the underdog Arcanics just might win – but nothing is certain in war.

THE PLAYERS...

MAIKA An Arcanic teen who survived the Great War, and slavery at the hands of the Cumaean witch nuns. Ruthless and haunted, she is determined to uncover the truth behind her mother's murder — and her mother's secrets — in the hope that she can free herself from an ancient and dangerous god called a Monstrum that is imprisoned inside her body and fills her with an otherworldly hunger for human flesh.

ZINN A mysterious, primordial Monstrum of tremendous power that shares Maika's body and mind, and fights her for control. Once considered a god, and drawn into this world by the Shaman-Empress, this Monstrum is driven by a deadly hunger, consuming the lives of humans and Arcanics alike, leaving only their desiccated corpses behind. Though it may give the impression that its only wish is to survive, there's far more to this creature, and its desires, than meets the eye…

KIPPA An Arcanic fox girl saved from slavery by Maika. Innocent and optimistic, she is frightened by the Monstrum — but trusts Maika and will bravely defend her and others by rushing into battles too dangerous for a child.

SIR CORVIN D'ORO An Arcanic Lord, First Watchman of the Court and Commander of the Inner Wall. He is loyal to the Dusk Court but has willingly defied their orders because of his desire to protect Maika and his belief that she can and will serve a greater purpose.

WARLORD The Dawn Court's "Sword of the East," twin sister of Moriko Halfwolf, and Maika's aunt. Ruthless in her ambition, the Warlord's greatest desire is to unravel the mystery behind the destruction of Constantine. She believes the secrets of Constantine will protect the Arcanics in their impending war against the humans — but she does not realize that the answers she seeks lie within her young niece.

TUYA: Maika's closest friend in the world, who has been with her since before the Battle of Constantine. Unbeknownst to Maika, she is also the Baroness of the Last Dusk, a high-level member of the Arcanic Dusk Court tasked with containing — or even destroying — Maika's power.

CONSTANTINE.
SIX YEARS AGO.

YOU'RE LUCKY TO HAVE SURVIVED, HEALER.

AM I?

=PANT=

=PANT=

=PANT=

LORD CORVIN!

=MMFF!=

HAMMER... HAMMER, LET ME SEE YOUR FACE...

GODDESS... AM I ALIVE?

GASP

GASP

MAIKA... MAIKA...

...OH, GODDESS, YOU'RE STILL WITH ME...

YOU SAW WHAT HAPPENED, RIGHT?

I DIDN'T IMAGINE IT?

...ONE OF THE OLD GODS SAVED US --

NO, IT WAS MAIKA WHO KILLED THEM ALL.

MAIKA? IT WAS THE OLD GOD!

AN OLD GOD FINALLY HEARD OUR PRAYERS!

TUYA'S RIGHT. DIDN'T YOU SEE WHAT HAPPENED?

SHE'S THE REASON WE'RE ALIVE.

SHE PROTECTED US.

NO, NO! WE'RE BLESSED BY THE --

I DON'T CARE WHAT YOU BELIEVE.

WE CAN NEVER TELL ANYONE WHAT WE SAW. WE WILL NEVER *EVER* TELL MAIKA.

IT WAS -- *NNGH* -- A MIRACLE. WE MUST BEAR WITNESS.

NO.

SPLLRGKK

ARE WE CLEAR?

TUYA'S LOST HER MIND.

WE ALL HAVE.

COME ON, LET'S GO.

MAIKA...

WHY DID IT HAVE TO BE YOU?

=GASP=

TUYA... YOU'RE ALIVE...

THERE'S NO WOUND... THE SKIN IS SMOOTH...

GODDESS... HOW...

WHERE'S MY ARM WHERE'S MY ARM WHERE'S MY ARM -- ?!

BE QUIET!

DO YOU FEEL ANY PAIN?

N-NO!

THEN FOCUS ON BEING ALIVE! THAT'S ALL THAT MATTERS!

...WHAT...WHAT HAPPENED...?

WAS THERE... WAS THERE A BOMB? BUT HOW...MY ARM... WHY DOESN'T IT HURT...

MAIKA.

LOOK AT ME.

WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER?

THE PRESENT.

TH-THAT'S H-HER! THE D-DEMON WHO KILLED MY ENTIRE SQUAD IN THE FOREST!

SHE ATE THEM! SHE ATE THEM!

SIGH

DID YOU EAT THEM, DEMON?

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

YOU CAN BOTH LEAVE.

BUT COLONEL, I GLIMPSED INSIDE CORPORAL DEVON'S MIND! THIS DEMON IS MORE DANGEROUS THAN YOU --

DO NOT LECTURE ME.

I AM NOT IN THE MOOD.

YOU HAVE NO RESPECT FOR OUR AUTHORITY, COLONEL. THE MOTHER SUPERIOR WILL HEAR OF THIS.

EXCELLENT. WHILE YOU'RE SNITCHING, TELL HER TO ORDER HER ENGINEERS TO START MAKING MORE WEAPONS.

WHAT DO I THINK, YOU ASK?

I THINK MOST OF THESE SOLDIERS WERE CHILDREN WHO SPENT THE LAST WAR LIVING IN GRIM HAVEN, FAR AWAY FROM THE FRONT LINES.

SHELTERED, LEFT TO THEIR IMAGINATIONS AND THE PREACHINGS OF SENILE CUMAEA.

AND NOW THEY'RE HERE, SEEING VIOLENCE FOR THE FIRST TIME, AND THEIR MINDS ARE PLAYING TRICKS ON THEM.

ZZZT

BUT DEATH DOESN'T REQUIRE EXAGGERATION.

ZZZT

SO, DEMON, TELL ME ABOUT RAVENNA...

...AND TELL ME WHO IS LEADING THEIR DEFENSE.

...WAIT... TO CUT OFF... MY TAIL...

...DON'T WANT TO LOSE IT...IF I'M GONNA DIE... ANYWAY...

PFFT. I WOULDN'T HAVE TO DO MORE THAN TUG. I DOUBT YOU'D EVEN FEEL IT COME OFF.

UBASTI WAS WATCHING OVER YOU TODAY. YOU MADE IT BACK TO US -- THAT'S ALREADY A MIRACLE.

...GAH... NOT GONNA BE SKINNED... SO A HUMAN CAN WEAR ME AS A HAT...

...RECRUIT A REPLACEMENT... FROM THE CLAW TEMPLE...

...SEND THE PRIEST MY MASK...SHE'LL UNDERSTAND...

SHUT UP. I CAN'T FIGHT A WAR WITHOUT *YOU.* VELA IS A MALCONTENT --

HEY.

-- AND THE OTHERS WEREN'T THERE FROM THE BEGINNING. THEY DON'T KNOW WHAT IT WAS LIKE IN THOSE EARLY DAYS, LEARNING FROM...

IS...IS HE DEAD?

JUST SLEEPING.

THE HUMANS HAVE STOPPED FIRING MORTARS ON RAVENNA, AND THEIR AIR FLEET STILL HASN'T ARRIVED. MAKES YOU WONDER.

SPECULATION WON'T FEED US, OR RESTOCK OUR AMMUNITION.

WE EITHER NEED TO LEAD THESE CIVILIAN FIGHTERS AWAY FROM RAVENNA, OR FIND A WAY BACK INTO THE CITY.

THEY DID BETTER THAN I EXPECTED. WE'RE RESPONSIBLE FOR THEM NOW.

I THOUGHT THE HALFWOLF WAS CRAZY FOR GOING BACK TO SAVE THEM.

BUT SHE WAS RIGHT. WE NEEDED EVERY LAST ONE.

SHE CAN'T HAVE SURVIVED, CAPTAIN MIN.

YOU WISH.

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"AS OF NOW, OVER ONE HUNDRED DEAD...BUT ALMOST EVERYONE, FROM CHILD TO ADULT, SUFFERED WOUNDS -- EVEN IF IT'S JUST SMOKE-BURNED LUNGS.

"UNFORTUNATELY, THE CITY'S BEST HEALER HAS ALSO BEEN... INCAPACITATED.

"THE TWO SURVIVING WITCHES STILL HAVEN'T BEEN LOCATED, BUT BETWEEN THEIR INITIAL ATTACK AND THE BOMBS, OUR FIGHTING FORCE HAS BEEN HALVED.

"WE STILL HAVE ENOUGH AMMUNITION FOR ONE LAST ENGAGEMENT, BUT NO MORE GRENADES."

FORTUNATELY, WE MOVED ALL THE FOOD AND MEDICINES TO THE OLD WARD -- EVERYTHING IS MADE OF STONE, SO NOT MUCH BURNED.

EVEN SO, WE'LL BE HARD-PRESSED TO HAVE PROVISIONS LAST THE WEEK.

IF THE FEDERATION ARMY CONTINUES THEIR SIEGE, WE'LL --

...ZZZT...LINK RE-ESTABLISHED... ZZZT...

LEAVE ME, CROW. WE'LL FINISH THIS LATER.

CAPTAIN... BEFORE MY RADIO DIED, YOU WERE TELLING ME A TROUBLING TALE INVOLVING MY AIR FLEET.

WHICH YOU SAY, AT THIS VERY MOMENT, IS INVADING THE FEDERATION UNDER MY *WIFE'S* COMMAND?

BARONESS, THE FEDERATION AIR SQUADRON IS LESS THAN AN HOUR BEHIND US. WE'LL HAVE TO STRIKE THE LILIUM REFINERY AND RETREAT...

...UNLESS WE WANT TO RISK A MAJOR ENGAGEMENT.

STILL NO SIGN OF A FEDERATION DEFENSE AT THE REFINERY?

NONE FROM THE AIR.

WE'LL HAVE TO MANAGE ARTILLERY FIRE FROM THEIR PERIMETER, BUT THE SHIELDS WE SECURED HAVE HELD AGAINST SIMILAR WEAPONRY DURING OUR TESTING PHASE.

GOOD. SEND DOWN THE CATS.

STAY CLOSE, STAY FAST, STAY SMALL!

YOU'RE JOINING THEM, REN? YOU'RE A NEKOMANCER, NOT A SAPPER.

NEVER ASSUME YOU KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT A CAT.

WHAT I *DO* ASSUME IS THAT YOUR MOTIVES ARE ALWAYS SUSPECT.

THE FEELING IS MUTUAL.

A PARTING WORD OF ADVICE, BARONESS...FOR OLD TIMES' SAKE.

IF YOU DO SEE THE HALFWOLF... YOU SHOULD TRY THE TRUTH, FOR ONCE.

TRUST CANNOT LIVE WITHOUT TRUTH...TO QUOTE THE POETS.

WHAT AN ODD THING TO SAY.

YOU KNOW FIRSTHAND THAT MAIKA IS ALL EMOTION, NO HEAD. HER RESPONSE IS ALWAYS RAGE, AND VIOLENCE.

THE TRUTH WOULD BE WASTED ON HER...

...AND IT WOULDN'T ALTER A THING.

HOW FOOLISH OF ME TO THINK THAT PEOPLE CAN CHANGE.

BLAM BLAM BLAM

FUCK, THAT ONE'S STILL ALIVE!

UBASTI... MAKE THEM BURN...

CLK.

DAMN IT!

THOSE CATS WERE SUPPOSED TO WAIT UNTIL WE WERE WITHIN RANGE OF THE REFINERY!

KA-CHOOM

THEY'RE TRAINED TOO WELL. SOMETHING MUST BE --

SSZZZSZZHIH

SSZZZSZZ

CHOOM

NNGH! FIRE BACK! RAZE THE FOREST!

WHY AREN'T WE SHOOTING?!

SABOTAGE! THE WEAPONS HAVE BEEN DESTROYED!

ALL THE FLEET ENGINEERS ARE REPORTING THE SAME THING!

BARONESS?! WE MUST RETREAT!

WE HAVE NO WEAPONS!

WE'RE IN SPITTING RANGE OF THE REFINERY.

THIS SHIP IS A WEAPON.

BARONESS, THIS SHIP CAN STILL FLY. LIVES CAN STILL BE SAVED.

I WILL NOT DELIBERATELY CRASH US INTO THE REFINERY.

WE MIGHT NOT EVEN MAKE IT THAT FAR. I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE WHAT'S FIRING ON US NOW.

GODDESS DAMN THEM.

THOSE HUMANS MUST HAVE --

I WASN'T TALKING ABOUT THE HUMANS.

TELL THE CAPTAINS TO RETREAT!

FLY TOWARD RAVENNA. AND GET THOSE GUNS REPAIRED, AND UNDER WATCH.

I'LL CHOOSE THE GUARDS MYSELF.

MA'AM, DID THE CUMAEA INSTALL NEW PERIMETER WEAPONS WITHOUT TELLING US?

NO, THEY DID NOT.

THEN... WHO'S FIRING ON THOSE DEMONS?

AND WHY ARE THEY DEFENDING US?

"IT TOOK NO EFFORT AT ALL, FATHER. THE BARONESS BEGAN TO RETREAT WITHIN MOMENTS OF OUR STRIKE."

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THANK YOU FOR MEETING ME HERE, EMILIA. TO BE HONEST, I THOUGHT THE EDENITES WOULD SEND SOMEONE ELSE.

I VOLUNTEERED. YOUR ADVENTURES MAKE GOOD DISTRACTIONS.

"THOUGH WE ARRIVED TOO LATE TO PREVENT THE CATS FROM DESTROYING THE COOLANT PIPELINE FROM THE RIVER."

"DO NOT TROUBLE YOURSELF, DAUGHTER.

"ALL THAT MATTERED WAS THAT THE LILIUM REFINERY REMAIN INTACT. ITS DESTRUCTION WOULD HAVE SET US BACK MONTHS."

IT WAS ODD, THOUGH.

NOT ONE SHIP FIRED ON US. I CAN'T UNDERSTAND WHY.

SOMEONE MUST HAVE SABOTAGED THEIR WEAPONS.

I COUNTED ON SUCH DUPLICITY.

THE ANCIENTS DON'T WANT THE LILIUM REFINERIES DESTROYED ANY MORE THAN WE DO.

ZZZT... STRANGE DEMON...ZZZT...BUT I KNEW TORTURE WOULDN'T BE EFFECTIVE ON HER...ZZZT...BURNS ALL OVER HER BODY...ZZZT...

I HAVE OTHER MATTERS TO ATTEND TO.

BE ON YOUR WAY NORTH, DAUGHTER.

...YES, FATHER.

...BURNS ALL OVER HER BODY, BUT SHE NEVER MADE A SOUND WHEN SHE WAS PULLED FROM THE BURNING WRECKAGE, OR DURING QUESTIONING.

SOMEONE LIKE THAT IS TOO STRONG FOR CONVENTIONAL TECHNIQUES.

SHALL I EXECUTE HER?

WITH A SWIFTNESS.

YOU'RE BORED WITH ME ALREADY, COLONEL ANUWAT?

"A GOOD INTERROGATION IS A DANCE BETWEEN NERVES AND PATIENCE. YOU MUST HAVE THE NERVE TO UNLEASH MAXIMUM SUFFERING...

...AND THE PATIENCE TO OUTLAST YOUR TARGET'S DESIRE TO LIVE."

I DID QUOTE YOU CORRECTLY, DIDN'T I?

LEAVE US. ALL OF YOU.

Y-YES, MA'AM. I MEAN -- COLONEL.

THERE YOU GO.

I WONDERED HOW LONG IT WOULD TAKE YOU TO REMEMBER YOUR BEST STUDENT.

TO BE HONEST, I WAS SURPRISED WHEN I HEARD YOU WERE COMMANDING THE ATTACK ON RAVENNA.

CHNG

YOU'D BEEN RETIRED FROM THE MILITARY FOR A DECADE BY THE TIME I CAME TO SETHIHAR.

BUT TOO MANY DIED IN THE LAST WAR. NOT MUCH REAL LEADERSHIP LEFT, IS THERE?

THAT MUST BE LONELY FOR YOU.

YOU'RE THE ONE LEADING THE DEFENSE OF RAVENNA.

I WOULDN'T CALL IT LEADING. I OFFERED SOME ADVICE.

I'M GOING TO OFFER *YOU* SOME ADVICE, COLONEL...

...BECAUSE A LONG TIME AGO, YOU WERE A MENTOR WHO TAUGHT ME HARD LESSONS AND PROTECTED ME WHEN I WAS ALONE.

THIS IS A DIRTY WAR.

THE CUMAEA HAVE BEEN INFILTRATED BY DEMONS -- ACTUAL DEMONS -- AND THEY ARE NOT ON YOUR SIDE.

THEY WANT THIS CONFLICT BECAUSE IT WILL HELP THEM DESTROY THE WORLD.

HUH.

AND IF THAT'S TRUE? YOU WANT ME TO MUTINY? SURRENDER? RAISE A PROTEST?

YOU KNOW THAT'S NOT HOW IT WORKS.

I'M A WAR DOG, LITTLE MITE.

UNTIL I'M TOLD OTHERWISE, I FIGHT TO WIN.

OF COURSE.

BUT I WANTED TO SEE YOU... SINCE YOU WERE IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD... AND TELL YOU WHAT I KNOW.

YOU DESERVE TO KNOW WHAT YOU'RE FIGHTING FOR, ANUWAT.

THERE WAS ALWAYS A BIT OF THE IDEALIST IN YOU, MAIKA.

EVEN IN OUR ACADEMY'S WAR ROOMS, YOU HAD TO FIGHT FOR SOMETHING. AN IDEA, A PERSON, A THING.

I'M GLAD LIFE DIDN'T BREAK YOU OF THAT.

IT ALMOST DID. BUT I'M FINDING MY WAY BACK.

LITTLE MITE.... I'M STILL GOING TO KILL YOU ALL.

EVERY LAST DEMON, BLOWN TO BONE AND BLOOD.

YOU CAN'T BLOW UP SHIT WITHOUT THAT CANNON, OLD WOMAN.

WE'LL SEE.

GUARD!

ESCORT THIS...HUMAN... TO THE FOREST.

NO ONE IS TO HURT HER.

YOUR MOTHER WAS A TREMENDOUS LIAR, YOU KNOW.

SO IT SEEMS.

IT'S IMPORTANT TO LOVE THE PEOPLE WHO LIE TO US.

SOMETIMES... IT'S ESSENTIAL.

HMMM.

MAKE ME PROUD TO FIGHT YOU, LITTLE MITE.

ER...IS EVERYTHING... WELL?

MORE THAN WELL. I WANT YOU TO DRAFT A LETTER TO COMMAND.

I'LL MAKE YOU SO PROUD, YOU'LL WANT TO RIP MY HEAD OFF.

TELL THEM WE ARE NOT GOING ANYWHERE.

"WHILE THOSE DEMON FOOLS SIT INSIDE RAVENNA, WE'RE GOING TO RAVAGE THE COUNTRYSIDE.

"WE'RE GOING TO HARVEST EVERY ARCANIC BODY WE FIND, AND SHIP THEIR CORPSES BACK TO THE CUMAEA.

"WE'RE GOING TO SALT THE FIELDS...FILL THE WELLS WITH CHEMICALS THAT WILL STERILIZE EVERY FEMALE DEMON WHO DRINKS THE WATER.

"BURN EVERY HOME. KILL THE LIVESTOCK... MAKE THIS PLACE A WASTELAND OF POISON AND DEATH FOR THE NEXT HUNDRED YEARS.

"AND IF THEIR AIR FLEET ARRIVES IN RAVENNA BEFORE OURS, WE'LL SCATTER INTO THE FOREST AND REGROUP FOR ANOTHER DAY.

"BUT I WILL NOT LET THEM DRIVE ME FROM THIS PLACE BEFORE I AM READY.

"I WILL NOT RETREAT."

ZINN, WHERE ARE --

-- YOU.

...OUR CHILD...WAS SO FRIGHTENED...

...I COULD NOT... SOOTHE HER... TEARS...

SHE WAS CRYING BECAUSE SHE WAS TERRIFIED OF YOU.

SHE SAW WHAT YOU DID TO HER MOTHER.

WHY DO YOU REFUSE TO LISTEN, ZINN? I WOULD NOT BE AWAKE INSIDE YOU IF YOU DID NOT WANT THE TRUTH.

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WAKE UP, YOU BASTARD. THIS ISN'T REAL.

...I HURT THEM...

YOU DID WORSE THAN HURT THEM, ZINN --

GET THE FUCK AWAY.

NNGH --

SMACK

YOU... SEE ME?

FROM THE MOMENT YOU FIRST APPEARED IN ZINN'S MIND, BITCH.

BUT I IGNORED YOU, BECAUSE YOU'RE JUST A WAY FOR ZINN TO SELF-TORTURE.

I KNOW ALL ABOUT THAT KIND OF SHIT.

BUT THIS IS MY MIND, TOO.

AND YOU'RE NOT WELCOME HERE.

THIS IS MORE MY HOME THAN YOURS.

BUT GO AHEAD... PROTECT THE GOD WHO BEGAT YOU.

...CHILD... IS THAT YOU...

ZINN WILL BETRAY YOU... EVENTUALLY...

...FUCKING ASSHOLES...

...WHAT DID YOU ANCIENTS DO?

=WHIMPER=

...HUSH... LITTLE ONE...

THE CHILD IS FILTH.

I CAN SMELL HER TAINTED SOUL.

SHHNKK

SHHNKK

THE ABOMINATION CANNOT LIVE!

COME WITH ME, ZINN. COME AWAY FROM THIS PLACE.

LIVING DOESN'T HAPPEN IN THE PAST.

...I HAVE RUN...FROM THE PAST...

...TRIED... TO SLEEP MY WAY... TO DEATH...

...TO NOT... REMEMBER...

...TO NOT REMEMBER... THE CHILD...

ZINN? PLEASE, WAKE UP --

...MY... CHILD...

=GASP=

=HUFF=

=HUFF=

LADY HALFWOLF... APOLOGIES. WE MUST SPEAK.

YOUR SISTER --

I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT HER.

THE WARLORD IS HERE.

SO I HEARD.

YOU SHOULD LEAVE THE CITY.

EVENTUALLY. BUT NOT YET.

THIS ISN'T THE FIGHT THAT MATTERS. YOU SAID THAT YOURSELF.

YOU'RE MEANT FOR MORE THAN SCRABBLING IN THE REMAINS OF A DOOMED CITY.

FACE IT, NONE OF YOU KNOW WHAT THE FUCK I'M GOOD FOR. EVEN I DON'T KNOW. I'M A MESS.

WHAT'S THE POINT OF HAVING POWER? WHAT'S THE POINT OF BEING BRED FOR POWER?

WHAT AM I FIGHTING FOR, CORVIN?

I WAS RAISED TO BELIEVE ONE MUST SACRIFICE THE FEW IF IT SAVES THE MANY.

BUT HOW MANY? HOW FEW?

WOULD YOU SACRIFICE *KIPPA* TO SAVE THE WORLD?

I DON'T BELIEVE YOU WOULD. I DON'T BELIEVE IT WOULD EVEN CROSS YOUR MIND.

AND THAT, LADY HALFWOLF, IS THE ANSWER TO YOUR QUESTION. YOU FIGHT FOR A *WHO*...NOT A WHAT.

I'M NOT THAT SENTIMENTAL.

TRY THAT BORING BRAVADO WITH SOMEONE ELSE.

HOW HARD IS IT TO ADMIT THAT YOU LOVE SOMEONE? THAT YOU LOVE KIPPA?

SPIT ON YOU, CROW.

I WOULDN'T EVEN KNOW HOW TO SAY THOSE WORDS.

LUCKY FOR YOU, WORDS DON'T MATTER.

REMEMBER THIS?

YOU SAID THAT WAS POISON. FOR ME.

I'M STILL UNDER ORDERS FROM THE DUSK COURT TO GIVE IT TO YOU.

IF I DID, YOUR MIND WOULD BE ERASED. YOUR SOUL, MURDERED. BUT YOUR BODY WOULD LIVE.

THEY THINK THEY CAN HARNESS THE OLD GOD...LIKE A PUPPET.

HOW LITTLE THEY UNDERSTAND WHAT'S INSIDE ME.

HOW MUCH OF THIS POISON EXISTS?

ENOUGH. DON'T WORRY ABOUT EATING OR DRINKING. IT HAS TO BE ADMINISTERED IN A VERY PARTICULAR WAY. I'LL TEACH YOU.

MAYBE ONE DAY YOU'LL FIND SOMEONE TO USE IT ON.

MAYBE IT'LL BE YOU.

I MIGHT WELCOME THAT.

HMMM HMM HMM...

MISS?

I'VE NEVER HEARD YOU SING.

WHAT IS THAT?

A LULLABY I LEARNED, WHEN I WAS YOUNG.

THERE WAS A GOAT HERDER, A LITTLE OLDER THAN YOU. WE WERE BEST FRIENDS FOR A SINGLE DAY.

I'M GLAD YOU'RE HERE, MISS.

I'VE BEEN SO SCARED.

I...I DID TERRIBLE THINGS.

WE CAN TALK ABOUT THOSE TERRIBLE THINGS, IF YOU WANT.

BUT FOR NOW...GO TO SLEEP, LITTLE FOX.

WE'LL BE HERE WHEN YOU WAKE.

TO BE CONTINUED...

Send letters & fan art to:
monstress.comic@gmail.com!
#monstress on Twitter and Instagram!

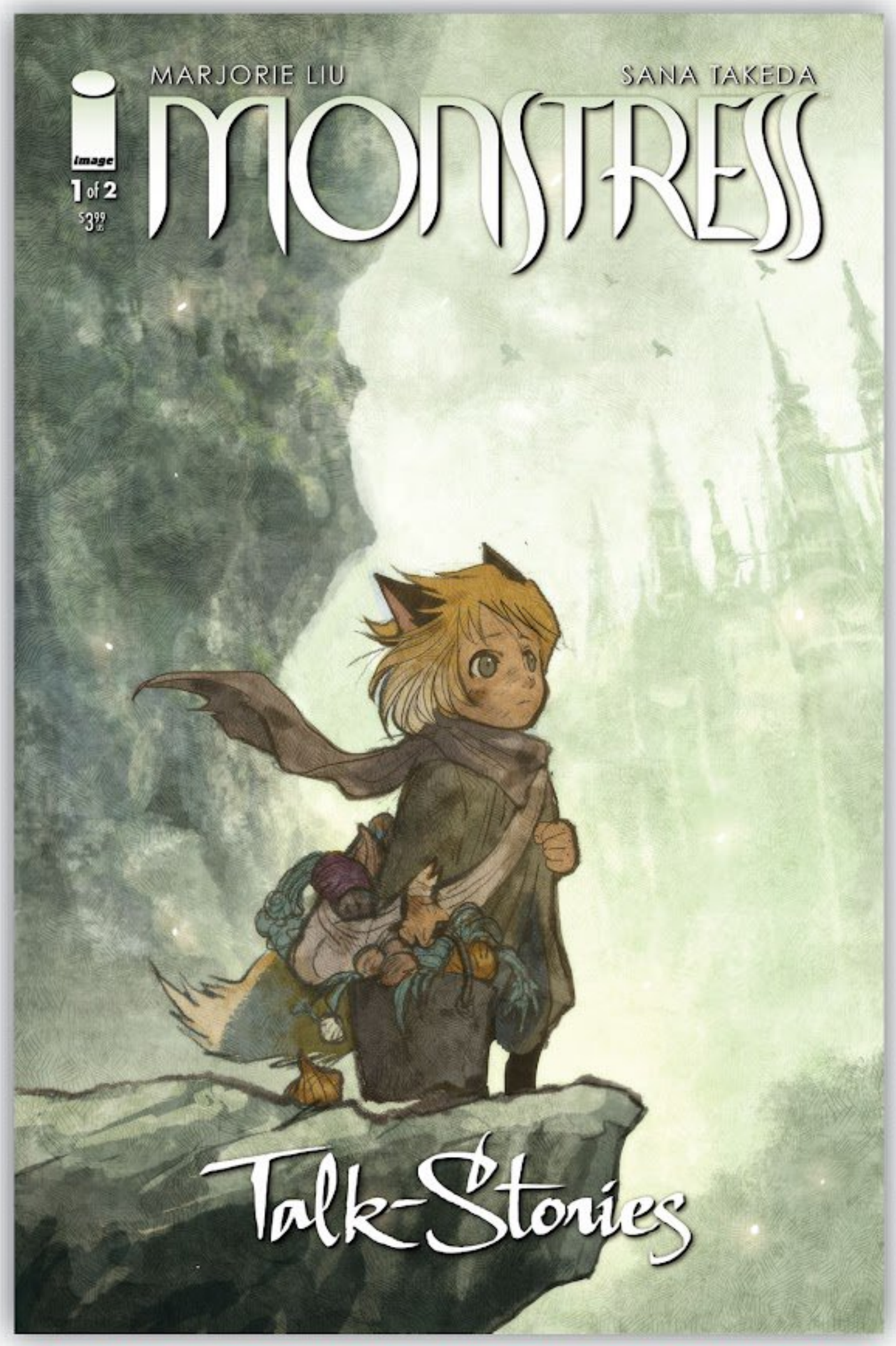
Dear Friends,

We dearly hope this finds you and your loved ones safe and well in these difficult times. We wish you healing, friendship, and love... we wish you heaps of luck and pluck...and, somewhere, a refuge and a soft place to rest whatever burdens you may carry.

Monstress will return sooner than usual this year – our next new issue will appear in November, the first of a two-part mini-series called *Talk-Stories* that bridges the 5th and 6th arcs. *Talk-Stories* will allow us to explore the deeper histories of characters like Kippa and Maika in ways that we simply haven't had room to do in the main book (we always seem to run out of space), and with any luck, it'll be a recurring mini-series that we bring back between arcs.

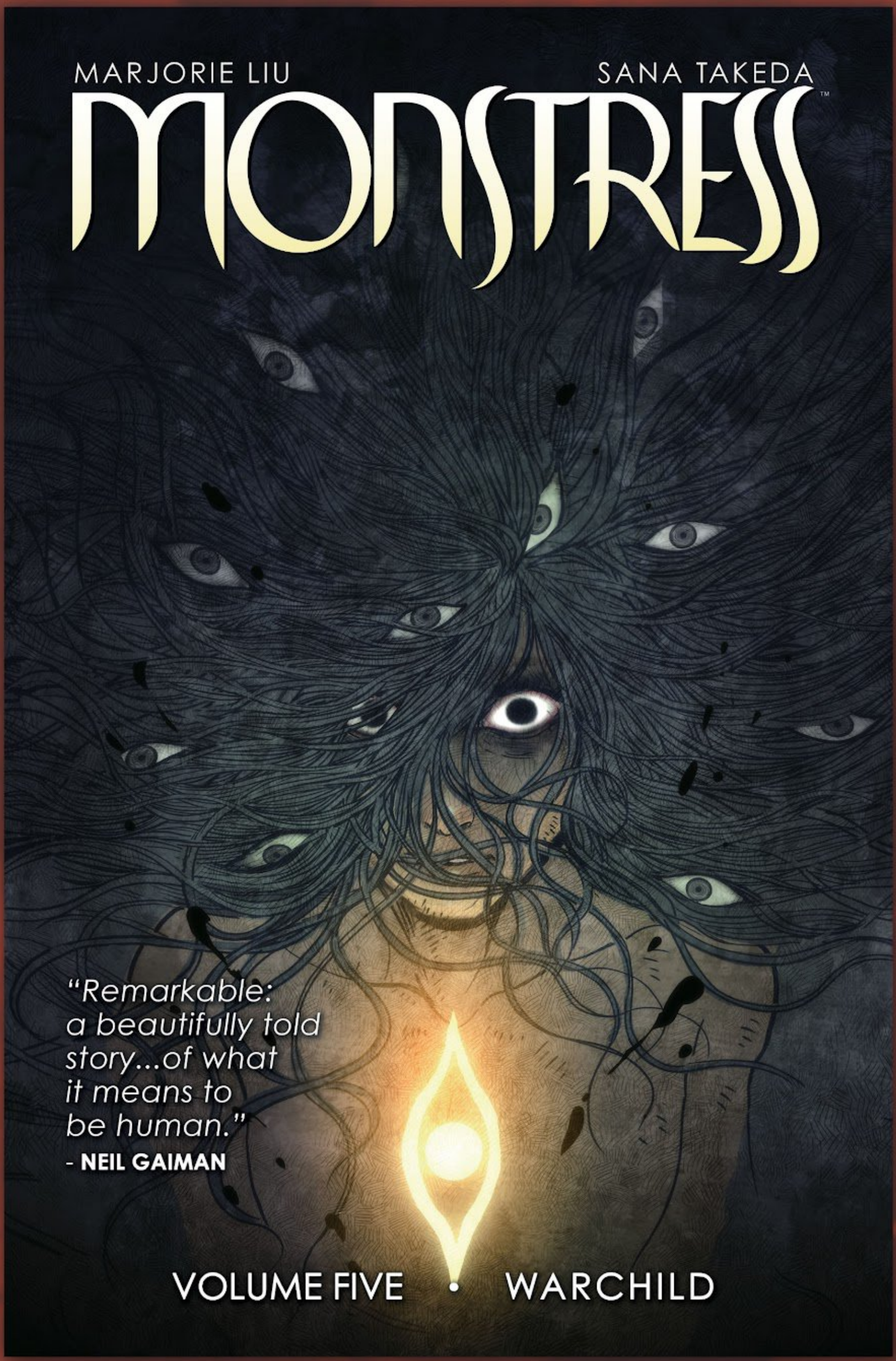
With all our hearts, we wish you well – and we offer our deep and sincere gratitude for the time you've spent with us these last five years.

Much love,
Marjorie & Sana



***MONSTRESS* RETURNS IN NOVEMBER!**

MONSTRESS VOLUME FIVE ON SALE IN SEPTEMBER!



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